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Major News Releases and Speeches

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Remarks

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

**Prepared for delivery by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block
before the National Cattlemen's Association's Board of Directors
meeting, Washington, D.C., April 14.**

I am delighted to have this opportunity to meet with you, and to share some thoughts on the challenges that will face us in the coming months.

But first, I want to express my appreciation on behalf of this administration for the support you have given to the president's economic program. I can assure you that your support is greatly appreciated—from the president on down.

When I spoke to your annual convention in Phoenix two years ago, most people had not realized the depth of our nation's economic problems. But all of us realize it now.

We've felt it in one way or another, mostly in the pocketbook.

And now we know that President Reagan had wisely charted the right course to lead this country back to prosperity.

We haven't reached that point, yet. But, there isn't a week that goes by without some new sign showing that recovery is spreading across our nation.

For example, the average interest rate for new conventional mortgages dropped last month to its lowest level in 2-1/2 years. And the 5-1/2 percent drop in Federal Housing Administration rates has lowered the cost of a \$50,000 mortgage by \$200 a month. That can spell the difference for many American families in fulfilling the American dream of owning a home.

Further, the president's policies have shrunk inflation from its 12.4 percent rate in 1980, down to 3.5 percent for the past 12 months. It's even lower for the past six month average.

Housing starts now are running at an annual rate of over 1.7 million. Auto sales are up, generating 53 percent higher domestic car production in the first two months of this year over January and February of last year.

The prime rate has been cut by more than half what it was when the president took office, and unemployment is finally starting to come down.

This recovery is exactly what the president's program has been aimed at all along: sustained, solid growth, with low inflation. That's the only kind of recovery that will last.

Agriculture is also going to play an active role in this recovery. We have the tools to do it, and we have the people within the industry who are willing to put their hands to those tools. And right now, things are looking a lot brighter than what they were last fall.

At that time, markets were depressed. Supplies of many basic commodities were overflowing. Markets were still weak.

Something had to be done and it had to be quickly.

Our economists figured it could take up to five years to turn things around. Farmers didn't have five years. And the government didn't have the billions of dollars it would take to support agriculture in the interim.

PIK Solves Immediate Dilemma

What we came up with was PIK, and judging from the tremendous sign up we've gotten, the farmers of this nation agreed that it's the right thing. They saw PIK as a personal action they could take to benefit both themselves and the rest of the nation, too.

A lot has already been written and said about the impact of taking 82 million acres out of production. Obviously, the final story won't be told until late this fall after the last acre has been harvested.

We know that PIK is not perfect. We know that some minor adjustments will have to be made as we deal with the complexities of delivering commodities to farmers.

We also know that PIK will have some less than desired side affects, particularly on farm suppliers. But those side affects won't be as great as some might have predicted.

The key point to remember is that the long-term benefits of PIK will far outweigh those short term costs. It's like castor oil: the stuff tastes terrible going down, but it gets the job done and you feel a lot better when it's all over.

Impact of PIK on the Cattle Industry

Your cattle industry is a case in point. The economists estimate that higher feed prices initially will result in lower feeder cattle prices. We all know that large numbers of young animals will be coming off wheat grazeout acreage late in the spring. Most of those animals probably will go into feedlots for at least a short period of time.

However, cattle feeders may be reluctant to fill their lots at current feeder cattle prices. That could mean that feeder cattle prices will be under pressure well into next year.

But, any higher feed prices caused by PIK will not be reflected in higher break-even prices until the second half of this year, and next year.

In time, as consumer demand rises with economic recovery, and meat output is tempered, cattle prices should strengthen.

Though times have been tough for everyone in agriculture, we all know that livestock producers fared better than many other farmers over the past year or so. Part of that is because the record breaking grain crops of those last two years resulted in cheaper feed prices.

Yet, any cattle producer who has been around very long knows full well that cheap feed is no bargain in the end.

PIK in 1984

What happens after this year in terms of PIK? Of course, it would be impossible to give a concrete answer to that today.

Given normal weather conditions here and abroad I think it's safe to predict there will be some type of PIK program next year. But, I would not go so far as to say it would cover all of the commodities in this year's program.

I know from your standpoint you'd like to have that decision made before winter wheat is put in the ground to remove the need for grazeout provisions next spring.

Well, I'd like to have that decision made before then, too. But the only commitment I can make at this time is that we'll do the best we can to announce our decision as soon as possible.

Market-Oriented Agriculture

Remember, with PIK we have succeeded only in buying some time. We have not bought prosperity. We simply have bought a little breathing space during which to focus our attention on some of the other critical issues.

As I see it, we have two basic options. We can continue along the path we've been following toward a more market-oriented agriculture or we can switch horses in mid-stream and opt for more government involvement.

That, of course, means more government controls, more regulated prices and less freedom for the farmer.

If I know American farmers—especially cattle producers—they aren't going to look kindly upon that latter option now. And, I can assure you, I don't intend to hop on the back of a dying horse now, either.

Freer Trade With Japan

That is partly why this administration is putting such a heavy emphasis on freer trade in world markets. And, that is why we are continuing to put pressure on Japan to lift its restrictions on the importation of more American beef and citrus products. You know what the problems are.

Japan is the largest single export market for American farm products, importing some \$5.5 billion worth of products last year. Those were mainly raw commodities such as grain, soybeans and cotton. We expect these will continue to be the big-ticket items in our trade.

But beef is important, too. In 1982, for example, we shipped 52,364 metric tons of beef products to Japan worth over \$232 million.

About 40 percent of those exports were beef by-products such as diaphragms, hanging tenders and outside skirts, not the choice cuts of beef that American cattle producers are famous for.

Japan recently announced its intentions to relieve some of their import restrictions. But none will help us ship more steaks and roasts over there.

We are disappointed that the Japanese are sticking hard to their quota and distribution system. But we have not given up hope, nor are we ready yet to scrap our negotiations.

As the president has said:

"We believe in free trade, but we are no longer going to play patsy for those who would use this commitment as leverage against us. Free trade means access for those trading with us, and it also means access for Americans to their markets. It's got to be a two-way street or no deal."

Dairy Price Supports

As I said earlier, there are those who want the government to get deeper involved in supporting prices, regulating production and buying up surpluses for certain commodities.

High supports. Overproduction. Government purchases. That all sounds familiar to me. In fact, that's exactly where the dairy industry finds itself today.

The president has said that I've been aging faster than the cheese we have in storage just from worrying about the future of the dairy program.

He may be right because I can't help but wonder how long it will take before everyone learns that government cannot guarantee high support levels without causing overproduction and greater trouble.

Unfortunately, we won't achieve a workable solution until everyone comes to an agreement that will effectively resolve the basic problem.

There simply are just too many cows out there, producing too much milk for a market that doesn't exist.

I sincerely hope it won't take the respective parties too much longer to get together. In fact, I hope that an agreement can be reached before August. Otherwise, we'll be forced to take another look at the second 50-cent assessment on commercial milk production.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again. A solution to the dairy problem must be unique. It cannot be a copy of other solutions for other commodities.

Other Issues

There are several other issues I could mention at this time, but I want to leave some time for questions from you.

I do want to say a word or two, though, about the report issued recently by a new advocacy group here in Washington concerning the alleged gaps in the government's food inspection programs.

Contrary to the misguided claims of that group, Americans today enjoy the safest, most wholesome, most abundant and generally the most affordable food supply in the world.

Obviously, there are challenges we need to meet in the area of residues, especially as technology improves our ability to identify and detect potentially harmful substances.

But, these are far from insurmountable. Americans can be assured the food they eat is as safe as science and the government can realistically make it today.

Regarding brucellosis, we are looking to Burt Hawkins—who we're happy to have on board as the new administrator of our Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service—to marshal the leadership we need from within the livestock industry to help us finish the job of eradicating this disease.

Burt's brand of leadership also will be put to the test as we deal with those issues surrounding confinement methods of raising livestock and poultry. We can't ignore the concerns of those dedicated people who believe in the rights of animals. But, we can play a major role in helping the nation reach a rational solution to the issues they raise.

Agriculture at a Crossroads

I'm convinced that agriculture is at an important crossroads. The problems we have faced in recent months will not go away quickly but I'm equally convinced we are headed in the right direction.

The president's economic program is paying dividends and people everywhere are beginning to feel better about their lives and their futures. The decisions we make in the coming months, therefore, could easily determine whether these short-term gains turn into long-term prosperity. With your continued support, I'm confident we can make that come true.

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Testimony

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

Statement by Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng before the Senate Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Agricultural Production, Marketing and Stabilization Prices, April 14.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, it is a pleasure to have this opportunity to discuss the dairy price support program with you today.

This administration has tried to deal effectively with several major agriculture issues during the past two years. Each issue posed a particular problem. In most instances, we have been able to arrive at a workable solution. Solutions were possible because the affected industries and commodity groups were able to join together and agree to support initiatives which were also acceptable to the Congress and the administration.

Unfortunately, we have been unsuccessful to date in achieving a solution to the dairy price support problem. While we made some limited progress initially, there remain serious problems with the program which demand immediate solutions. It is generally agreed that a reasonable dairy price support program is badly needed. But the hour is indeed getting late. And consensus is elusive.

The Reagan Administration accepts the need for a dairy price support program which provides for adequate, reliable supplies of pure, wholesome milk at reasonable prices. While we recognize that the program must provide dairy producers an adequate return, it must also be at a reasonable cost to the government and ultimately the taxpayers. The cost of the current program is unreasonable and excessive.

The Recent Past

The dairy price support program generally performed quite well from 1949 until about 1980. During most of this time, the price support level was high enough to give producers a fair return while consumers were supplied with an adequate and wholesome supply of milk and dairy products. However, the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 amended the Agriculture Act of 1949 to increase the minimum support level to 80

percent of parity, an historically high level, and mandated a mid-year adjustment of the support price. Moreover, in 1979, these provisions were extended for two additional years.

That legislation has been the primary cause of one of the most serious problems the dairy industry has ever encountered. It sent dairy producers an economic signal to produce more milk. More importantly, the historically high price support level attracted additional production resources into the industry. Cow numbers increased for the first time in 30 years, and productivity per cow continued to rise. This expansion in dairy production resulted in a tremendous surplus of dairy products at a cost to taxpayers of over \$2 billion per year. It has continued to expand in 1983. At the same time, the high level of price support has acted to discourage consumption. The end result has been virtually to bury the nation in surplus dairy products.

It would be wrong to blame dairy producers for this gross overproduction. Dairy producers simply reacted to the price signals that were being sent by their government—and they were the wrong signals since they ignored the marketplace. Excess production and lower consumption resulted.

Yes, the dairy problem was caused by the government. We adopted legislation that provided for inflexible adjustments in the price support level which bore no relationship to the marketplace. And now we have a serious surplus problem placing the dairy support program in jeopardy.

Early in this administration a decision was made to seek Congressional approval to maintain the support price at a specified level. We realized that a severe overproduction problem had been set in motion that had to be turned around. Congress accepted our proposal to eliminate the semiannual adjustment in the level of price support which was scheduled for April 1, 1981 and hold the support price at \$13.10 per hundredweight. It has remained the same now since Oct. 1, 1980.

But milk production continued to increase, demand leveled off, surplus inventories kept building, and the program costs kept rising. Our options were limited. During consideration for the 1981 farm bill, the administration sought flexibility in adjusting the level of price support for milk.

We faced strong opposition and were not able to achieve enough moderation in the price support level. By late 1981, the situation was completely out of control and it was obvious the provisions in the 1981 farm bill would not solve the problem. At the same time, it became clear that without the united support of the dairy industry, the chances of getting a workable solution would be severely limited.

Last March, the secretary called for a dairy symposium in Kansas City. He felt it was imperative to provide a forum in which the dairy leaders of this nation could get together and generate input from the industry.

The symposium produced a wide range of ideas. While there was no consensus developed for any one proposal, the overriding mood of the participants was to find a solution that would work. It was apparent to everyone that we had little time and could not afford to make too many more mistakes.

After considerable deliberation, the administration, in May of 1982, supported an overall dairy package that requested legislative authority in two areas: (1) discretionary authority for the secretary of agriculture to establish the price support level as needed to bring milk production under control, and (2) amendments to the 1949 Act to allow the Commodity Credit Corporation to donate dairy products overseas and to permit domestic donation of these products to needy households.

At that time, the secretary promised not to adjust the support level until Jan. 1, 1983 in order to allow producers enough time to begin making the necessary cutbacks and still have the benefits of the higher price support. But at that time, he also pledged that the price support level would not be lowered below \$12 per hundredweight. The secretary also outlined a number of administrative steps we could take, including stepping up our domestic donations to needy families. And we have acted on most of them.

The proposal was offered to Congress last year. It was soundly rejected. In its place, Congress passed the dairy deduction plan in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1982. The administration never liked this plan, we never supported it and we knew it would not solve the problem. Even on the day it passed, we predicted the Congress would again be facing the issue before too many months passed.

After grassroots opposition was voiced by farmers to the deduction plan, you could find no one who would claim it. The end result was a law, a deduction, that virtually no one supported.

USDA announced plans to implement the deduction, 50-cents per hundredweight starting last December. Immediately, numerous lawsuits were filed across the country. Before the month ended, we were legally restrained from collecting the deduction.

In January of this year, we again announced plans to implement the deduction effective April 1 and asked for public comment. At the same time, we asked for comments on a proposal to begin collecting the second 50-cent deduction which was authorized by Congress. The comment period ended Feb. 28.

The second deduction contains a provision for giving a refund to producers who reduce their commercial marketings from quantities marketed during a designated base period. In attempting to collect the second 50-cent deduction, USDA will be faced with a difficult administrative problem. This will be difficult because individual past production levels must be verified and current production of each producer will have to be monitored.

USDA has spent a considerable amount of time and effort trying to resolve this problem. We have talked with the industry and Congressional leaders, again trying to reach some sort of consensus. But now it is time for the administration, the dairy industry and the Congress to make some tough and timely decisions. Delaying these decisions will not resolve the dairy surplus problem.

Present Situation

This brings us to where we are today and it is important to put the situation in proper perspective. First, USDA announced that the first 50-cent deduction will be implemented effective April 16. In addition, we will very soon be conducting the necessary public rulemaking to determine whether the second 50-cent deduction should be implemented.

There must be a better way. There surely is a better, less complex solution which will be widely acceptable. The administration has indicated repeatedly that alternative proposals will be given serious consideration. We believe that a solution to the dairy problem must be

unique. It should be designed to strike directly at the heart of the situation.

The secretary of agriculture, in a dairy policy statement last month, urged that a solution embrace these principles:

- It should allow freedom of initiative for an individual dairy producer. It should not force him or her to operate under any type of restrictive system.

- It should maintain the basic type of program that has served the producers and the industry so well since 1949.

- It should lower dairy surpluses by simultaneously reducing milk production and increasing consumption.

- It should be simple to administer and easily understood by dairy farmers.

- It should give the secretary of agriculture the flexibility over time to adjust the program to changing supply and demand situations.

Proposals which embrace these principles will receive the support of this administration. We have purposely not offered a specific proposal to show that we are willing to work with the industry and with the Congress to fashion a reasonable dairy policy.

We are aware there are some who resist giving the secretary of agriculture any flexibility to achieve an adequate balance between supply and demand. We believe they are unnecessarily fearful. No secretary of agriculture, under any administration, would ever lower the support price to a level which would result in a shortage of milk.

We asked for greater flexibility in our last proposal and the Congress rejected it. But respectfully we ask the Congress to reexamine our position.

A sound, workable dairy support plan should not be complicated. The type of plan we had in place for many years was simple, effective, and clearly understood by farmers. We should seriously consider this before adopting a totally new, complex approach.

If a sufficient resolution is not forthcoming by Aug. 1, USDA will again consider the implementation of the second 50-cent deduction. We certainly hope this will not be necessary. We believe the Congress and the industry share our concerns.

We have been very encouraged about the prospects of getting the dairy price support program headed in the right direction. We have

been approached by dairy producers, dairy cooperatives, farm organizations, commodity groups and state officials. Many of them are voicing a similar theme: A reduction in price supports is the best approach. Demand for milk products must be increased and reducing the price support level is the most effective way to ensure that. This adjustment is necessary for fluid as well as processed dairy products. In addition, it sends a signal to farmers to adjust output to market needs.

Time is Short and Cooperation is Needed

For the past two years the nation has searched for a solution to the dairy support problem which would somehow leave all dairy producers untouched. The failure of such efforts is apparent when one looks at the gigantic mountains of butter, non-fat milk powder and cheese in government warehouses. The failure in getting control of the program is disturbingly apparent when we add up the over \$6 billion net cost to the taxpayers in just about three years.

Further failure to come to grips with the dairy problem threatens a total end to the support program. We must not allow this to happen.

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News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

LONGTERM USDA STUDY CLEARS SOY PROTEIN

CHICAGO, April 11—Longterm consumption of ground beef with added soybean protein exerts little effect on the body's ability to absorb dietary iron, U.S. Department of Agriculture human nutrition researchers said here today.

They said a six-month study involving 227 adults and children fed a diet containing soy protein showed that iron and zinc levels in the blood either improved or were not significantly changed.

These findings were presented by the research team at a meeting of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. Team members are C. E. Bodwell, Eugene R. Morris and Carolyn W. Miles, all of USDA's Human Nutrition Research Center in Beltsville, Md.

The USDA findings challenge several earlier nutrition studies which suggested that soy proteins posed a health risk. Those earlier studies were based on single-meal tests and indicated that soy proteins may sharply reduce human absorption of iron.

Soy protein is widely used in the United States in meals provided by the military, in school lunches, baby formula and many diet supplements.

Three of the most common soy protein preparations were investigated in the USDA study. These were textured soy flour, soy protein isolate and soy concentrate. In addition, the study analyzed the possible benefits of fortifying soy proteins with dietary iron or zinc.

To investigate the nutritional impact on iron status under practical conditions, Bodwell and colleagues at the agency's Human Nutrition Research Center studied 52 households from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. In addition to the participants in the feeding study, "control" volunteers were selected so that normal variations could be monitored.

After passing a thorough medical evaluation, the 227 participants continued their usual lives as much as possible during the study.

Each family received especially prepared "meat" patties which were eaten for protein in 7-9 meals each week. Seven kinds of patties were

tested: all beef; beef with three types of soy protein; and beef with three soy proteins fortified with iron and zinc.

Complete blood analyses were done at the beginning and end of the six-month study.

Ferritin—the body's iron storage protein—was measured during these analyses and also at 45-day intervals.

Adult males also participated in two absorption tests in which they consumed meals specially labeled with a radioactive isotope of iron. The absorption tests provided highly accurate check measurements for the ferritin analysis, Bodwell said.

The patties (except all-beef) were prepared with 20 percent soy protein and 80 percent protein from beef. This ratio is close to that specified for ground beef purchased by the U.S. Department of Defense, Bodwell said.

USDA's national school lunch program—which provides about 23 million lunches per school day—allows use of soy to replace up to 30 percent of ground meat.

"Neither the Department of Defense nor the school lunch soy protein level appears to present a risk of a soy-induced iron or zinc deficiency," Bodwell said.

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USDA PROPOSES CHANGES IN GRADE STANDARDS FOR CANNED SWEETPOTATOES

WASHINGTON, April 11—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today proposed revisions in the U.S. grade standards for canned sweetpotatoes that would change shape and size requirements and tolerances for defects in the product.

USDA developed the proposal at the request of the canned sweetpotato industry, according to Charles Brader, a marketing official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. Comments should be submitted to USDA by June 13.

Brader said uniformity of size and shape currently is determined by comparing the second smallest sweetpotato unit to the largest unit, regardless of the size of the container.

"This is not always equitable," Brader said. "It's much easier to maintain a controlled ratio when there are only six to eight units in a small can as compared to 30 to 40 units in a large can. As a result, a large can has a greater chance of being rejected."

Under the proposal, 90 percent of the units, by count, would have to fall within the tolerance for uniform size.

The proposal also eliminates the factor of "shape" from the "uniformity of size and shape" requirements.

The proposal establishes "whole and pieces" as a style of canned sweetpotatoes and requires that not less than 50 percent of the drained weight of the product consist of whole sweetpotatoes. Other combinations of two or more styles, excluding mashed, would be considered as "mixed" style.

Pathological and insect damage would be included in the definition of blemishes. This addition would permit an increase in the tolerance for these defects from 1 percent to 2 percent, but would not affect the total of maximum percentages allowed for blemishes in the current standards. A tolerance for untrimmed tough external fibers also is specified.

The proposed revisions contain simplified tables outlining grade requirements for the product. Brader said the format is consistent with revisions of grade standards for other products and is designed to provide simple, comprehensive standards for industry members and agricultural commodity graders.

The proposal is scheduled to be published in the April 12 Federal Register, available at many public libraries. Written comments should be sent in duplicate to the Hearing Clerk, rm. 1077-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, where anyone may see them.

The Agricultural Marketing Service establishes grade standards and provides official grading for many food products. Use of the grading service is voluntary and paid for by the user.

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USDA PROPOSES CHANGES IN GRADE STANDARDS FOR TOMATOES FOR PROCESSING

WASHINGTON, April 11—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed revising the U.S. grade standards for tomatoes for processing to make the standards more reflective of technological advances in the industry.

Charles Brader, a marketing official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed revision was developed in consultations with industry representatives and key federal and state inspection personnel.

The proposed revision would establish basic color evaluation procedures with the flexibility necessary to adjust to advances in electronic colorimeter technology and meet other changing needs of the industry. Those who use the standards would be given the option of using a colorimeter of their choice without ruling out use of currently specified instrumentation, Brader said.

The proposal is scheduled to be published in the April 12 Federal Register. Copies of the proposal can be obtained from David L. Priester, F&V Division, AMS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250; phone (202) 447-5410.

Public comments on the proposed changes will be accepted through May 12. The comments should be sent to Hearing Clerk, rm. 1077-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, where they may be seen by the public.

The Agricultural Marketing Service establishes grade standards and provides official grading for many food products. Use of the standards and grading service is voluntary and paid for by the user.

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PUBLIC NOW CAN MAKE DONATIONS TO PLANT TREES

WASHINGTON, April 11—An opportunity for people to make donations to finance planting trees on the national forests was announced today by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block.

In response to numerous public requests, Block said, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service has established the plant-a-tree program to give individuals and groups an opportunity to help improve the nation's forests.

Contributions may be made by groups and individuals in their own names or in honor of others.

For a minimum \$10 donation, contributors will receive a certificate acknowledging their gifts. Individual trees will not be marked to recognize contributors but probably will be planted on the national forest nearest the honoree's home.

Based on current needs, the Forest Service will select the species and sites to be planted. The number of plantings that will result from an individual donation will vary due to differences in costs in various parts of the country.

Donations to the plant-a-tree program will be accepted at all Forest Service offices. The donations are tax deductible.

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USDA, PEACE CORPS ENCOURAGE RETIREES TO VOLUNTEER

WASHINGTON, April 11—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block and Loret Miller Ruppe, director of the Peace Corps, today announced a program to encourage retiring USDA employees with special skills to consider service as volunteers in the Peace Corps.

Under the program, USDA will send letters to some 3,000 former employees with skills in such areas as crop production, plant protection, animal husbandry, range management, the development of cooperatives, the application of appropriate technology, soil and water conservation, forestry and agricultural education.

In the future, USDA employees will be contacted as their retirement approaches, Block said.

At a ceremony at USDA, Ruppe said the special agricultural skills of USDA retirees can help build the self-reliance of people in developing countries in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean region.

"Agriculture is fundamental to the economic well-being of almost every country, and is especially critical in developing countries," Block said. "A strong agricultural base enables a developing country to meet the basic food and nutritional requirements of its people, provides jobs for many who need work and, through exports, enables the country to earn the foreign currency needed to engage in trade for other products that it needs."

The Peace Corps now has more than 5,200 volunteers serving in over 60 countries. Ruppe said, with about 3,000 replacements needed each year. Retired USDA volunteers with specialized agricultural skills could help meet this need, especially for the critical skills related to food production, he said.

USDA already is involved in international agricultural development and assistance through its Office of International Cooperation and Development. The new cooperative agreement between USDA and the Peace Corps will help both organizations better carry out their international responsibilities, Block said.

The Peace Corps pays travel, medical and living expenses of volunteers during their service. Volunteers also receive stipends of \$175 per month which are available when their service is completed.

Technical training, instruction in the language of the country to which they are assigned and an introduction to the culture and life of that country are all provided to volunteers before departure.

Volunteers generally serve for a 2-year period, but they can extend their service for another year or longer. Arrangements can be made for a husband and wife to serve together, Ruppe said.

More information on volunteer opportunities is available from the nearest Peace Corps office, or by calling, toll free, (800) 424-8580, extension 93, or by writing to the Peace Corps, Washington, D.C. 20523.

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USDA PROPOSES CHANGES IN FLUE-CURED TOBACCO GRADE STANDARDS

WASHINGTON, April 11 — Changes in U.S. Department of Agriculture flue-cured tobacco grade standards now being considered would more accurately describe flue-cured tobacco currently marketed, a USDA official said today.

Lioniel Edwards, an official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed changes are necessary to carry out grading of the different qualities of tobacco that have surfaced in recent years.

The proposed changes, Edwards said, include the addition of nine new grades and two new definitions for the color combinations of whitish-lemon—LL -and dark red variegated—DK—tobacco. Ten grades would be dropped.

The new grades include:

- two grades for prematurely ripe and pale-colored tobacco from the cutters groups that have taken on characteristics of the primings group;
- two grades for whitish-lemon colored tobacco produced during wet growing seasons;
- three grades for darker colors of tobacco increasingly marketed over the past few years:
 - one grade for 4th quality slick lugs;
 - one grade for tobacco with variegated orange colors found primarily in the cutters group.

Grades proposed to be abolished represent a quality of tobacco that has diminished to the point that retention of the grades is unwarranted.

Comments will be accepted until May 12 by the Tobacco Division, Rm. 502-Annex, AMS-USDA, Washington, D.C., 20250.

Notice of this action is scheduled to be published in the April 13 Federal Register.

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FCIC MODIFIES DRY BEAN RESTRICTIONS IN MINNESOTA, NORTH DAKOTA

WASHINGTON, April 11—Some dry bean producers in Minnesota and North Dakota will be allowed to insure dry beans on acreage previously denied U.S. Department of Agriculture federal crop insurance coverage due to rotation restrictions.

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Manager Merritt W. Sprague said the agency will modify the rotation restriction which denied insurance on any dry bean acreage which had been planted to potatoes in either of two preceding crop years. Following extensive field surveys, FCIC determined that, to date, there was no significant increased risk of disease in a dry bean crop following potatoes in a rotation.

"We are concerned that 'white mold' can become a problem in potato production as it has been in dry beans, but there is not sufficient evidence to use this as the sole reason to prevent potatoes from being planted as a rotation crop," Sprague said.

This change is effective immediately and will apply to 1983 plantings.

Counties affected by this ruling are: Marshall, Renville and Swift in Minnesota; Cass, Grand Forks, Pembina, Steele, Traill and Walsh in North Dakota.

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USDA ADOPTS STRINGENT CONTROLS FOR REJECTED MEAT AND POULTRY IMPORTS

WASHINGTON, April 12—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has adopted stringent measures to prevent rejected meat and poultry imports from illegally entering U.S. commerce.

The final regulations slightly modify emergency interim rules USDA implemented Aug. 19, 1982.

USDA had adopted the interim rules after finding in the spring of 1982 that some imported product rejected by USDA had still managed to enter the U.S. market, said Donald L. Houston, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

"Acting on that knowledge, we immediately tightened procedures for the marking, handling and re-exporting of refused-entry meat and poultry," Houston said.

Federal laws on meat and poultry imports, cooperatively enforced by USDA and the U.S. Customs Service, provide that any product that is refused entry must either be treated to prevent its use as human food or exported from the United States.

"While federal import inspection has largely worked well in protecting consumers from undesirable meat and poultry products, there are still those who will try to use loopholes to move rejected product into commerce," Houston said.

To prevent such abuses, the final rule amends the meat and poultry inspection regulations to prohibit:

- The application ("pre-stamping") by USDA inspectors of U.S. "Inspected and Passed" markings on any product until all USDA inspections are completed;
- The dividing of lots of refused-entry products into smaller lots for separate disposition;
- The sale of refused-entry product, except to foreign consignees for re-export, or, with Food and Drug Administration approval, to U.S. companies for use as animal food;
- The movement of refused-entry product from port to port without full written information on the product's disposition; and
- The movement of any refused-entry product except under security seals.

The final rule also extends from 30 to 45 days the deadline for owners or consignees of rejected product to export or denature it. This time limit can be extended only under extreme emergencies, such as a dock strike or the lack of a vessel for transport.

If the importer or consignee does not properly dispose of the rejected product within the time limit, USDA is authorized to take appropriate action to destroy it.

"To assist importers, the final rule also formalizes procedures for bringing misbranded, technically mislabeled meat and poultry imports into compliance," Houston said. "If a label discrepancy is the only problem with the product, a USDA inspector can supervise employees of the importer while they correct it."

USDA received 13 comments on the interim rule—6 from industry associations, 4 from importers/exporters, 1 from a farm organization, 1 from a farmer and 1 from an insurance company.

An analysis of the comments is scheduled for publication in the April 13 Federal Register notice publishing the final rule. The final rule will become effective May 13.

#

USDA PROPOSES NEW INGREDIENT STANDARDS FOR PORK, BEEF PRODUCTS

WASHINGTON, April 12—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to define the ingredients acceptable in pork products—such as ground and chopped pork and pork burgers and patties—to ensure their quality and consistency.

The proposed ground pork standard, similar to the present ground beef standard, was developed in response to a petition from the National Pork Producers Council, according to Donald L. Houston, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. The council requested the standard to assure consumers high-quality, consistent ground pork products without excessive fat.

Under the proposed pork rule, products labeled "ground" or "chopped" pork would consist mainly of chopped fresh or frozen pork mixed with pork fat and seasonings.

"Their pork fat content would be limited to 30 percent, and no ground pork product could contain added water, binders, extenders or phosphates," Houston said. The addition of mechanically separated—de-boned—pork also would be prohibited.

The proposal sets the ingredients for pork patties as chopped fresh or frozen pork mixed with pork fat and seasonings. Pork patties could also contain binders or extenders, mechanically separated pork used according to USDA regulation, and partially defatted pork fatty tissue. Water may be used in the mixture but only in amounts that preserve the product's basic "meat patty" character.

Finally, the proposal defines "pork" exclusively as swine meat from skeletal muscle tissue, the diaphragm or esophagus. Swine heart or tongue meat would not be considered "pork."

"We're taking this opportunity to update our definition of beef as well," Houston said, "to bring the official regulations in line with agency policy. In the proposed definition, 'beef,' like pork, can only be derived from skeletal muscle."

None of the new standards—for ground pork, pork patties or ground beef—represents a departure from current industry or government practice, Houston said.

"The proposed amendment to the beef products regulations merely clarifies the time-honored use of the word 'beef,' and most ground pork producers already observe the proposed pork definition," he said.

The Federal Meat Inspection Act provides that USDA may prescribe definitions and standards for meat and meat food products when such action is necessary to ensure product quality and protect the consumer.

Comments, which should be identified as responses to Docket Number 82-012P, will be accepted, in duplicate by June 13, by Annie Johnson, FSIS Hearing Clerk, Rm. 2637-S, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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WORK OF FOREST SERVICE VOLUNTEERS PRAISED

WASHINGTON, April 12—Volunteers are playing an increasingly important role in helping maintain and improve the nation's natural resources, R. Max Peterson, chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, said today.

April 17-23 has been designated by the president as National Volunteer Week and Peterson said the coming week is an ideal time to recognize volunteers. Peterson cited the Volunteers in the National Forest Program as an example of the effectiveness of volunteer efforts. Begun by an act of Congress in 1972, this volunteer program has grown dramatically in the past few years.

"In 1981, we had 16,000 volunteers in the program, and last year, participation more than doubled to 42,000 people," Peterson said.

"Volunteer efforts for 1982 were valued at more than \$15 million and ranged from cleaning campgrounds to programming computers.

"The dedication and talents of individual volunteers are responsible for the success of any volunteer effort," Peterson said. "The quality of the work achieved by Forest Service volunteers and their commitment to the program have more than exceeded our expectations." Peterson said Forest Service volunteer Thomas W. Dibblee, Jr., is an outstanding example of volunteerism in America. Dibblee, 72, is the recipient of a 1983 President's Volunteer Action Award. Since 1979, Dibblee has contributed work valued at more than \$500,000 as a volunteer mapper on the Los Padres National Forest in California.

"The contributions of volunteers like Tom Dibblee prove that the American spirit of volunteerism can continue to play an important role in accomplishing important tasks," Peterson said.

The Forest Service is seeking 50,000 volunteers this year, Peterson said. Potential volunteers may contact their nearest Forest Service office or write: Volunteers, Forest Service-USDA, P.O. Box 37483, Washington, D.C. 20013.

#

PEOPLE LIKE VOLUNTEER ROLES IN THE FORESTS

WASHINGTON, April 12—If you're willing to serve without a salary, you may wish to join the ranks of young Americans who accept jobs simply because they want to do something for the common good.

These people work as volunteers in the nation's forests.

Students around the country recommend the work, offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service in a program called Volunteers in the National Forests. They say the work is fun, personally satisfying, boosts their academic endeavors and often gives their careers a lift.

Sometimes, even doubters become believers.

"Sure I was skeptical about not getting a paycheck, but I took a gamble and it paid off," said Paul Leadabrand who served as a volunteer wilderness ranger in Colorado's magnificent Eagles Nest Wilderness.

"I was majoring in forestry production at Humboldt State College in Arcata, Calif.," said Leadabrand, "and I saw the volunteer program as a good opportunity to get some real experience. Even though I didn't earn much money, it turned out to be a very worthwhile summer."

While doing the volunteer work, Leadabrand completed a study on the impact of four-wheel-drive vehicles on the wilderness. His work was so well received that, after he graduated, the Forest Service hired him on a permanent basis to supervise the use of off-road vehicles in the wilderness.

Diane Nelson of Galva, Ill., also found something of value on the snowcapped peaks of Eagles Nest.

"I saw the volunteer program as an opportunity to gain experience and do something different," said Nelson. "Instead of working in the heat of Illinois, I spent my summer maintaining trails and patrolling campsites in mountainous areas that often were more than 12,000 feet high and snow-covered."

Nelson said the experience she gained as a volunteer helped her complete her studies in recreation and parks administration at Illinois State University.

"Last year alone, more than 42,000 volunteers contributed work to the Forest Service valued at \$15 million," said Stan Gaylord, the Forest Service's national volunteer coordinator. "In return, we gave them a chance to gain valuable experience and to expand their horizons. We also provided insurance coverage and often reimbursed them for incidental expenses."

Gaylord said the Forest Service makes every effort to place volunteers in jobs that are both interesting and related to the volunteers' interests or career goals.

For instance, most people don't associate the Forest Service with computers. But many volunteers are finding the agency to be an excellent place to gain experience with the latest data processing equipment.

"As far as I'm concerned, being a Forest Service volunteer is definitely a good experience," said Debbie Irvine, a 19-year-old computer sciences major at Lassen College in Susanville, Calif.

As a volunteer working in the supervisor's office of the nearby Lassen National Forest, she spends several hours each day entering Forest Service data into the agency's computers.

"Because I live only a few minutes away from the office, volunteering is almost like having all this sophisticated equipment in my own home," she said. "Without the volunteer program, I would never have had the opportunity to gain as much experience as I am getting now."

Journalism students also find the volunteer program to be a good source of experience.

"While majoring in journalism at California's Chico State College, I spent three days a week during the summer working in the information office of the Mendocino National Forest," said Peggy Markham of Hollister, Calif.

"Not only did I get a chance to work at a variety of information jobs, but the many different kinds of people who came to the office to ask questions about the Forest Service increased my understanding of the wide variety of audiences the agency serves. I find that experience to be particularly useful in my current job as a newspaper reporter."

Barbera Merlin, a student at San Francisco State, currently is a volunteer in the Forest Service's regional information office in San

Francisco. She said the program has been so well-received that San Francisco State students who volunteer receive credit toward graduation. Among her other volunteer duties, Merlin is putting together a discussion panel to help recruit more volunteers.

"Not only has being a volunteer given me experience, it has opened up new career opportunities for me," she said. "Based on my experiences here, I think I would someday like to be an information officer assigned to a national forest."

Some of the more traditional natural resource professions associated with the Forest Service, such as timber, wildlife and recreation management, are notorious for the difficulties they pose for students who want to gain experience in them. The volunteer program helps eliminate these difficulties.

"Volunteering provided me with my first real field experience," said Bob Willging, a wildlife management and biology major at the University of Wisconsin.

"Last summer, I spent five valuable weeks as a volunteer wildlife management assistant on the Chequamegon National Forest in Wisconsin. I'm sure that experience will make my resume look more attractive to prospective employers after I graduate."

Karen Kelly of Corrales, N.M., is surveying the different types of snow play in which people participate on the Cibola National Forest in her home state. The data will be used to see whether more areas should be designated for these activities.

"It doesn't bother me that I'm not getting paid for my work," she said. "The work is interesting and it's helpful to my studies as a recreation major at the University of New Mexico. It's fun, too."

Sometimes participation in the volunteers program can leave a lasting impression.

David Taylor, a student at Davidson College in North Carolina, worked as a volunteer on Virginia's George Washington National Forest last summer. While surveying timber stands, he had an unusual encounter.

"I had just crossed the road and started into the woods when I heard a strange buzzing sound," he said. "I looked down and there was a rattlesnake at my feet. I don't think I'll ever forget that experience."

Despite that unnerving incident, Taylor says he recommends the volunteer program to other college students.

The program has even become international in scope.

Last year, Thomas Wurth, a forestry student at the University of Freiburg in West Germany, volunteered to help out on the Klamath National Forest in California. He was so impressed that six more students from his school are coming to the Forest Service as volunteers this summer.

The program is not limited to college students. High school students also may participate, although permission must be obtained from parents if the students are under the age of 18.

Three times each week, high school students Mark Swenson and Denise Bishop spend two hours after school working as volunteers in the supervisor's office for the Sequoia National Forest in Placerville, California. Mark enters data into a computer and Denise works in the information office.

There are Forest Service offices in 44 states, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Information on volunteering is available at these offices, which are listed in the phone book under "U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture," Potential volunteers also may write: Volunteers, Forest Service-USDA, Box 37483, Washington, D.C. 20013.

The only qualifications needed by volunteers are good health and a willingness to work.

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Backgrounders

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY EXPORT SUBSIDIES

BACKGROUND—European Community production and export incentives have been of concern to the U.S. farm community for well over a decade.

With the "safety valve" of subsidized exports, the EC has increased production in many commodities well beyond self-sufficiency. Then they have disposed of the resulting surpluses on the world market.

In 1982, the EC spent \$5.6 billion, or about 44 percent of its total agricultural budget, on export subsidies. The cost of this program is borne not only by European taxpayers but also by the United States and other agricultural exporters through lost overseas sales opportunities, downward pressures on world commodity prices and losses of fair world market shares.

THE SITUATION—The EC now is the world's largest exporter of dairy products, sugar, poultrymeat, eggs and wheat flour, the second largest exporter of beef and veal, and the fourth largest exporter of wheat.

In every case, these supplier positions have been attained by virtue of government subsidies and often at the expense of traditional suppliers, including the United States. These commodities are the most important, but the EC provides export aids on a wide range of other products as well.

U.S. RESPONSE—Bilateral discussion and multilateral action through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade have resulted in no improvement in the difficult U.S. competitive position caused by export subsidies. In order to defend its markets, the United States has begun using export credit in new and different ways.

The United States implemented a blended export credit program last October with an authorization of \$100 million in direct interest-free credit to be combined with \$400 million under existing credit guarantees, thus lowering the average rate of interest.

Because of the success of this program, which financed the sale of more than 2.5 million tons of U.S. farm commodities, the blended credit authorization has been increased to more than \$1 billion dollars.

In addition, using CCC surplus stocks of wheat and credit guarantees, we have made it possible to conclude a one-million-ton sale of wheat flour to Egypt by private traders at prices competitive with those of the EC. Other options are under study to meet specific situations.

The United States is not undertaking a trade war. We continue to want stronger international rules on export subsidies. We want to negotiate solutions, but we intend to maintain our competitive position in world markets.

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SOIL EROSION PROBLEMS AND THE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

The Soil Conservation Service helps protect and improve America's soil and water resources—beginning with a nationwide network of local conservation technical specialists who help people select and apply conservation practices to protect their land.

More than 2 million land users already are working to protect their land through local soil and water conservation districts with SCS help. They have shown that technology is available now to enable farmers and ranchers to reduce soil erosion on most soils. While research continues to be needed to develop more cost-effective conservation systems, proven techniques can be applied today to keep more soil in place on every kind of land and for every crop.

Last December, President Reagan sent to Congress A National Program for Soil and Water Conservation, aimed at making USDA even more responsive to farmers and ranchers and to urgent natural resource problems. The program and background data on resource trends were called for in the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977.

He acknowledged decades of effort and accomplishment of local, state and federal agencies and individuals, but he added that "a substantial number of farmers have not applied needed conservation measures. Too much water is not efficiently managed, resulting in a

threat of water shortages. Too much land is subject to excessive flood damages."

The RCA program sets priorities for USDA soil and water conservation efforts—reduction of soil erosion where soil productivity is threatened, and better water conservation and management as well as upstream flood prevention.

The RCA program also calls for targeting technical and financial help to areas where soil erosion and water problems are most serious. Testing of this concept since mid-1981 has been encouraging. In the first full year, 3.5 million fewer tons of soil were lost in targeted areas and 130,000 more acre-feet of water were saved in targeted areas—over what regular assistance programs would have achieved. Response from land users has been excellent.

The RCA program calls for more emphasis on cost-effective soil conservation measures, notably conservation tillage—perhaps a farmer's best bet for holding down soil erosion. The term covers a wide range of farming systems in which residue from the previous crop is left on top of the soil to keep soil from washing and blowing as well as retaining soil moisture. Most systems also reduce the number of trips across the field, thus saving time and fuel as well as soil.

A new computer program—SOILEC at the University of Illinois—will help SCS demonstrate to more farmers that conservation tillage costs less to use on most soils than clean tillage. It compares costs of several conservation practices, singly and in combination, and estimates annual soil losses. SOILEC will be available for use soon.

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CARGO PREFERENCE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE LAW—The Cargo Preference Act—Public Law 83-664—requires that at least 50 percent of all government-generated cargo be transported on privately-owned U.S.-flag vessels, provided that such vessels are available at fair and reasonable rates. To ensure compliance, the U.S. Maritime Administration of the Department of Transportation

monitors the shipping activities of some 67 federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

ITS APPLICATION—Since the 1954 amendments to the Act, U.S. administrations have determined that the law is applicable to U.S. programs which provide concessional terms designed to aid the recipient country, but not to programs, whether subsidized or not, designed to result in sales on the best terms and conditions available on the world market. For USDA, this has meant that the PL 480—Food for Peace—Program has been subject to cargo preference. In addition, USDA is taking steps to ensure that its donations of surplus dairy and other products under Section 416 of the Agricultural Act of 1949 move under cargo preference provisions.

In FY 1982, U.S. flag vessels carried 1.9 million metric tons of PL 480 Title I/III cargo, representing 50.1 percent of the total tonnage approved by USDA for that year. So that PL 480 recipient countries would not have to bear the higher cost of U.S.-flag vessels, USDA approved \$98 million in payments in FY 1982 out of Commodity Credit Corporation funds to U.S. shipping companies. The combined value of these ocean freight differential payments over the past five years has amounted to \$387 million. The weighted average differential per ton of Title I/III exports in FY 1982 was \$52.57 compared to \$58.46 in FY 1981.

Under Title II donations of agricultural commodities to foreign countries, CCC pays for the entire cost of ocean transportation whether U.S. or foreign vessels are used. Since much of the Title II program involves shipment of packaged or bagged cargo on liner vessels where there often is little or no difference between U.S. and foreign flag freight rates, the cost of cargo preference is considerably smaller than in the Title I/III program, which is characterized more by bulk shipments.

The commercially-oriented credit and credit guarantee programs of USDA, including the blended credit program, facilitate sales at the best terms and conditions available on the world market and are not subject to PL 664. Similarly, USDA has, when compelled by world markets, operated direct export subsidy programs—including, at times, payment-in-kind programs—exempt from cargo preference.

In an exception to established practice, on Feb. 22, 1983, President Reagan ordered half of the one million tons of flour to be shipped to

Egypt under the current U.S.-Egypt agreement be transported by U.S. flag vessels. A White House announcement noted "the unique circumstances surrounding the competitive sale to Egypt."

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ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Federal government owns one-third of the Nation's land mass, about 744 million acres. These properties are managed by numerous individual departments. Some of these lands are inefficient to manage or are no longer needed for federal government purposes. However, there has been virtually no incentive for agencies to identify or to release property that is unneeded.

In February, 1982, the president initiated a comprehensive new program, called the Asset Management Program to: (1) review the real property holdings of the federal government; (2) improve management of property retained in federal ownership; and (3) expedite the sale of unneeded property so that it can be put to more productive use. Each executive agency was asked to look over its present real estate holdings and to report any unneeded property, i.e., property that could be disposed of without adversely affecting activities of the agency.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service manages 191 million acres of land. As the first stage of the Asset Management Program, the Forest Service placed this acreage in three categories.

The first, lands to be retained, initially consisted of about 51 million acres which included all congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, national recreation areas and national monuments.

The second category consisted of about 60,000 acres initially identified as excess to the needs and objectives of the Forest Service and which could be offered for immediate sale without additional legislative authority.

The third category of 140 million acres was quickly inventoried to identify those areas which later might be studied more intensively to determine their suitability for retention or possible sale.

The results of this inventory were announced March 15, 1983. About 134 million acres were found unsuitable for further study and added to the 51 million in the "retention" category. Only a little over six million acres could be subject to further study.

USDA presently has no authority to sell national forest system lands.

It is preparing a legislative proposal which would authorize the secretary of agriculture to sell those National Forest System lands determined to be "unneeded" as a result of those studies. Under present plans, the intensive study of the six million acres will begin after the authorizing legislation is passed.

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